



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release

February 23, 2009

FEDERAL CHARGES FILED IN COATESVILLE ARSON CASE

PHILADELPHIA - United States Attorney Laurie Magid today announced that 19-year old Mark Gilliam, of West Chester, PA, was charged by criminal complaint with attempted arson of a commercial property. The complaint alleges that in January 2009 Gilliam attempted to set fire to the Happy Days Family Bistro, at 3470 East Lincoln Highway, in Thorndale, PA, just outside of Coatesville. This charge resulted from an extensive and around-the-clock investigation conducted by the Joint Arson Task Force, made up of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. The task force was established in January 2009 to investigate a series of arson fires in Coatesville and the surrounding area.

"The people of Coatesville have been held hostage by dozens of fires. These fires have wreaked havoc in the community, caused tremendous property damage, and caused incalculable suffering," Magid said. "Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have worked day and night to build this case. The arrests in this case have made Coatesville a safer place."

"These arrests bring Coatesville one step closer to a sense of peace and civility," said Special Agent-in-Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Mark Potter.

"This task force investigation, and the arrests that have resulted from it, stands as an example of how multiple agencies from multiple jurisdictions can come together and address a crime problem that is plaguing a community," said Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge of the Philadelphia Division of the FBI Jayne L. Challman.

The complaint alleges that Gilliam had an interest in and knowledge of firefighting, and that even had applied to be a firefighter, but his application was denied. He was arrested February 19, 2009.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT(S)

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE
Mark Gilliam	19	West Chester, PA

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If convicted, the defendant faces a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison and a maximum sentence of 20 years.

The Joint Arson Task Force, which consists of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Coatesville Police Department, Pennsylvania State Police, and the Chester County Detectives. It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Denise S. Wolf.

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